

Message Text

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NODIS CHEROKEE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, KS, KN, US

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SUBJECT: REPLY TO PRESIDENT PARK'S AUGUST 24 LETTER

REF: (A) SEOUL 6623, (B) SEOUL 6571

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT PARK'S LETTER OF AUGUST 24 (REF A) AS WELL AS EARLIER CONVERSATION WITH ME (REF B), REPRESENT NEW DIMENSION, WITH IMPLIED PRESSURE FOR FURTHER LIMITED MILITARY TYPE ACTIONS. RECOMMEND WE RESPOND URGING CAUTION AND FULL CONSULTATION OF ANY REACTION TO PRESENT INCIDENT OR SUBSEQUENT PROVOCATIONS AGAINST U.S. OR ROK. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT PARK, IN HIS MOST RECENT COMMUNICATIONS, REF A AND B, HAS TAKEN A NOTABLY TOUGHER STANCE THEN HE DID IN HIS FIRST REACTIONS TO AUGUST 18 INCIDENT. FURTHER REACTION ON PART PRESIDENT PARK IS REMINISCENT OF HIS APPROACHES DURING BOTH PUEBLO AND EC-121 INCIDENTS. WHILE APPRECIATIVE OF ACTIONS TAKEN SO FAR, PARK BY IMPLICATION HAS DOWNGRADED THEM AND URGES NOW FURTHER LIMITED MILITARY TYPE ACTION (EYE FOR EYE) WHILE BEING DELIBERATELY CIRCUMSPECT ABOUT SPECIFICS. IN SIMILAR MOVE, HE HAS PUBLICLY COMMITTED HIMSELF TO RETALIATORY ACTION SHOULD FUTURE PROVOCATIONS OCCUR (SEOUL 6476).

2. PARK'S EFFORT TO RAISE THE ANTE IS ENTIRELY IN CHARACTER, REPRESENTING HIS CONSISTENT BELIEF THAT NORTH KOREAN COMMUNIST PROVOCATIONS SHOULD BE ANSWERED IN KIND AND HIS USUAL EFFORT

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TO EXTRACT MAXIMUM POSSIBLE COMMITMENT FROM U.S. AT SAME TIME,

HOWEVER, PARK HAS ALWAYS PROVED CAUTIOUS ABOUT ACTIONS LIKELY TO SET OFF FULL SCALE CONFLICT. HE PROBABLY SEES CURRENT MOMENT WITH MAJOR NEW U.S. DEPLOYMENTS IN KOREA AS LEAST RISKY OPPORTUNITY, AT LEAST IN HIS CONTEXT, TO HIT BACK WITH MORE PUNCH AT KIM IL SUNG. IN THIS CONNECTION, I FOUND RELEVANT KIM CHUNG YUM'S COMMENT THAT ROKG HIGH COMMAND EXPECTED (AND PROBABLY HOPED) THAT SOME BLOOD WOULD BE DRAWN DURING TREE-CUTTING INCIDENT, ALTHOUGH FIGHTING CONFINED TO JSA.

3. WE HAVE OPTION OF PASSING OFF PARK'S COMMENTS WITHOUT SPECIFIC RESPONSE SINCE I LEFT BALL IN HIS COURT, TO SOME EXTENT, BY ASKING HIM TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US IF HE HAD ANY SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS. HOWEVER, I THINK THIS WOULD BE MISTAKE SINCE IT WOULD LEAVE OPEN WITHOUT COMMENT PARK'S APPARENT PRESENT INCLINATION TO RESPOND IN KIND WITH VERY LIMITED RETALIATORY ACTION SHOULD NORTH KOREANS INSTIGATE ANOTHER PROVOCATION, AT LEAST AGAINST HIS OWN FORCES. FURTHER ACTIONS BY US IN RESPONSE TO AUGUST 18 INCIDENT AS WELL AS A PARK RESPONSE TO SUBSEQUENT PROVOCATIONS MIGHT INDEED BE APPROPRIATE, BUT THEY SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO CLOSEST POSSIBLE CONSULTATION AND REVIEW BY US. I ALSO RECOMMEND THAT WE MOVE QUITE QUICKLY ON THIS COUNT BEFORE PARK'S VIEWS BECOME EMBEDDED IN CONCRETE.

4. IN MESSAGE TO PARK, FORCEFUL, BUT NOT ABRASIVE, REMINDER TO PARK OF HOW MUCH HAS ALREADY BEEN ACCOMPLISHED BY REACTION TO AUGUST 18 INCIDENT WOULD BE IN ORDER. MESSAGE TO PARK SHOULD ALSO INCLUDE OUR STATED INTENTION TO SEEK ASSURANCES ON SAFETY, ETC., FROM NORTH KOREANS AND IMPERATIVE NEED FOR CONTINUED CLOSE CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION IN RESPONSE TO CURRENT AND FUTURE PROVOCATIONS BY NORTH KOREANS.

5. WITH THESE THOUGHTS IN MIND I WOULD SUGGEST RESPONSE TO PARK INCLUDING FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. WE HAVE APPRECIATED HIS VIEWS AND CONTINUING COOPERATION AND SUPPORT FOR OUR EFFORTS IN RESPONSE TO AUGUST 18 INCIDENT AND HAD IN FACT FOLLOWED HIS ADVICE.

B. THESE EFFORTS HAVE ALREADY ACHIEVED SIGNIFICANT RESULTS. WE HAVE DEMONSTRATED FIRM DETERMINATION TO STAND UP TO CHALLENGES

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OF NORTH KOREANS BY BOTH ACTIONS AND WORDS. MAJOR DEPLOYMENTS INTO AND AROUND KOREA AND OUR TREE-CUTTING OPERATION HAVE DEMONSTRATED OUR STRONG POSTURE AND OUR WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT RISKS TO STAND UP FOR OUR RIGHTS. WE HAVE THEREBY DETERRED SPREAD OF CONFLICT. NORTH KOREAN POSTURE AT MOST RECENT MAC MEETING, EVEN IF NOT FULLY SATISFACTORY, ALSO REFLECTS OUR PRESSURE FOR PREVENTING FURTHER INCIDENTS. FURTHER, NORTH KOREAN COMMUNISTS HAVE BEEN PUT ON DEFENSIVE, HAVE DEMONSTRATED SO FAR

UNWILLINGNESS TO CHALLENGE US, HAVE BEEN FORCED TO MAKE MOST UNCHARACTERISTIC, IF NOT FULSOME, APOLOGY, AND HAVE LOST CONSIDERABLE INTERNATIONAL CREDIT. WE BELIEVE THAT EVENTS OF LAST WEEK WILL STAND ROK IN GOOD STEAD IN FORTHCOMING UNGA, AS WELL AS IN OTHER DIPLOMATIC ENDEAVORS.

C. IT SHOULD BE SOURCE OF GRATIFICATION TO ROKS JHAT ALL ELEMENTS OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC HAVE SUPPORTED OUR POSITION, INCLUDING THE FIRM ACTIONS TAKEN BY USG.

D. AS TO THE FUTURE WE INTEND TO PURSUE ASSURANCES AND ACTIONS REQUESTED AT MAC MEETING OF AUGUST 25, CONSISTENT WITH ADVICE GIVEN US BY ROKG.

E. WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER ANY FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR SPECIFIC ACTIONS PRESIDENT PARK HAS IN MIND. BUT IT CONTINUES TO BE IMPERATIVE, IN RESPONSE TO THIS INCIDENT AS WELL AS TO SUCH FUTURE PROVOCATIONS AS MAY OCCUR, THAT THERE BE AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION WITH RESPECT TO ANY ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION BY EITHER GOVERNMENT. IN THIS RESPECT WE CONTINUE TO CONCUR WITH THE VIEW PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED BY PRESIDENT PARK THAT WE SHOULD AVOID MILITARY ACTIONS WHICH COULD LEAD TO BROADER HOSTILITIES.
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